

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Istook Fights Methamphetamine Use in Oklahoma

Washington, D.C. - To address the growing methamphetamine problem in Oklahoma, Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) has included language in a major spending bill intended to designate Oklahoma counties as "high-intensity drug trafficking areas."

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, only three other states had more clandestine lab seizures in 1999 than Oklahoma. A 1999 state study also revealed that total methamphetamine use in Oklahoma was 42 percent higher than the national average and 80 percent higher among ages 26-34.

"Meth labs and methamphetamine use are a serious concern in Oklahoma," Istook said. "A HIDTA designation gives Oklahoma law enforcement significant help in their fight against illegal drug use."

The language included by Istook recommends that the Office of National Drug Control Policy expand the current North Texas HIDTA to include Oklahoma counties. A HIDTA designation will aid Oklahoma law enforcement by allowing more federal drug enforcement funds to be spent in the state. The bill allocates a total of \$231 million to fund all the 28 HIDTA regions across the country, a \$25 million increase from last year.

The HIDTA designation will also increase coordination between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies through cooperative investigations, information/intelligence sharing and joint operations.

Istook, who chairs the Treasury, Postal and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, included the HIDTA provision when he wrote the bill. The \$17 billion appropriation bill was unanimously approved today by Istook's subcommittee and now heads to the full appropriations committee for approval.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy reports that methamphetamine is the most prevalent synthetic drug clandestinely manufactured in the United States. It is highly addictive and can be manufactured using products commercially available, making small towns and rural areas popular targets of manufacturing and distribution. Methamphetamine causes agitation, increased body temperature, paranoia, and may even lead to a condition known as "amphetamine psychosis" or death.